
STRESS MANAGEMENT AMONG EMPLOYEES AT WORKPLACE

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ABSTRACT

At present scenario, most of the employees are facing stress at many organisations. The organisations in India need a clear and comprehensive legislative frame work for promoting cordial stress free environment in the organisation, which will enhance the productivity and health of the industrial sector in India Stress is the psychological and physical state that results when the resources of the individual are not sufficient to cope with the demands and pressure of the situation. Stress can undermine the achievement of goals, both for individual and for organisations. Stress in excess quantity can cause harmful effects on the body, mind and psychology of employees. Employees may experience stress in the workplace when they have overwhelming workloads, too few advancement opportunities and ineffective ways to resolve conflicts with one another, delay in job completion, and deterioration of the power organisation, depression and feeling of helplessness and over sensitivity are the major impact of stress on the productivity of professionals. In order to minimize stress, delegating some work, share burden with colleagues, leave and time off work with family and loved ones, as well as reducing work overtime ranked highest as strategies for stress management.

An attempt has been made through this article to know the Causes of stress among employees and the techniques used by employees to cope with the stress generated at workplace. The stress management among workers, measuring the stress, Legality of stress.

Keywords: Stress, Legislative framework, Causes, Techniques, Stress management, Legality.

INTRODUCTION:

In our everyday lives we get to hear the word ‘stress’ from our peers, colleagues, teachers and doctors. Even the word ‘stress’ can be heard now a day in the news, in the magazines and on other social media too. But exactly what is stress? In the layman’s language stress is ‘frustration or anxiety or nervousness or change in regular function of mind or body due to negative or positive influences around us’. So the definition of stress by different experts or as follows:

Arnold (1960) thinks that “stress is any condition that disturbs normal functioning”.

Selye (1974) defines stress as “stress is a non specific response of the body to any demand”.

Beehr and Newman (1978) defined stress as “stress is a condition arising from the interaction of people and their jobs and characterised by changes within people that force them to deviate from their normal functioning”.

A recent report by the National Association of Mental Health distinguishes stress from pressure, where pressure can be defined as a subjective feeling of tension or arousal that is triggered by a potentially stressful situation. But, where pressure exceeds an individual’s ability to cope, the result is stress.

OBJECTIVE:

A lot of research has been conducted into stress over the last hundred years. The main objective of the present article work is as follows:

- 1) The effect of stress on individuals’ life.
- 2) Importance of stress management.
- 3) In which extent stress management techniques is successful in managing stress.
- 4) To identify the different methods & techniques of reducing stress.

CAUSES OF STRESS AT WORKPLACE:

1. STRINGENT DEADLINES:

Having tight deadlines can cause incredible pressure on employees. It can make them feel overwhelmed and stressed as they try to stay on top of an excessive workload while trying to manage other work demands or expectations.

How to address it: Look at the processes and expectations you have in place to ascertain if deadlines are reasonable. For example, how long does a worker take to complete an assignment? Are they given enough time or do they need further aid, support, and resources to do their job effectively?

2. WORKING LONG HOURS:

Many jobs require long hours, which could be detrimental to achieving a healthy work-life balance. Multiple studies suggest a correlation between long working hours and depression. In addition, demanding work schedules put extra mental and physical strain on employees, leading them towards employee burnout quickly if left unchecked.

How to address it: Ensure enough downtime between shifts, so employees don't become overworked and can make time for their personal life. Make managing stress and work-life balance a priority and a company-wide philosophy.

3. HEAVY WORKLOAD:

When given too much work without proper guidance or resources, it can leave employees feeling like they have no control over their job situation, resulting in increased stress levels due to a lack of autonomy.

How to address it: Consider restructuring workloads so each employee has manageable amounts of work at any given time. Offer additional training or support where needed to help prevent employee burnout.

4. NEW ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES:

Before taking on new roles or responsibilities within a company, employers should

ensure staff is adequately trained and feel equipped and ready for the task. Proper guidance before anyone takes on new duties or roles can help reduce anxiety and other potential workplace stressors.

How to address it: Provide adequate preparation before any new roles are assumed. This might include things such as offering structured training sessions or comprehensive onboarding. Then, employees can hit the ground running and have a better chance of success in their new role.

5. INEFFECTIVE OR NON-EXISTENT COMMUNICATION:

Organizations must implement effective communication strategies — this applies to daily routines and messaging, as well as when making significant changes — to ensure everyone involved understands what’s happening and how they may be impacted.

How to address it: Make sure teams have the tools to communicate quickly, effectively, and efficiently to improve employee engagement and prevent a potentially stressful situation. Use communication software and apps that make it simple for teams to stay in touch and up-to-date with news and information.

6. JOB INSECURITY:

Job insecurity can be a significant source of emotional stress for employees, leaving them anxious about their prospects and placing an added burden on the existing worries related to job performance. Research shows people are overwhelmingly worried about their jobs — in fact, 43% of people surveyed in one study said they worry about job security.

Tools like Talk space mental health services offer employees peace of mind knowing someone is available 24/7 if things become overwhelming. This proactive approach helps alleviate stress levels while empowering individuals to get the help they may want and need rather than turning to unhealthy behaviours.

How to address it: Companies can provide stability through initiatives such as career development programs that keep individuals up-to-date on current industry trends so they can move up within their organization and feel valued in their roles. Offering mental health resources can help an employee reduce anxiety surrounding job insecurity, too.

7. UNSAFE ENVIRONMENTS:

Organizations must foster a safe environment that encourages open dialogue to address potential conflicts arising from miscommunications or misunderstandings. According to Talkspace research, 32% of people quit their job due to a toxic work environment.

Creating an atmosphere where employees can openly express their concerns and grievances can help alleviate tensions among co-workers, enabling them to concentrate on tasks more efficiently.

How to address it: Providing resources such as counselling services through Talkspace can give employees a sense of calmness within stressful working conditions, knowing that someone is available 24/7 should things become overwhelming. This proactive approach can reduce stress levels and empower individuals.

8. UNCLEAR POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Managers and supervisors can intervene early on by implementing policies and procedures that give staff members a sense of ownership and power over their assigned projects. Having a clear understanding of expectations and protocols will help prevent frustrations from building up over time which could eventually lead to feelings of depression or helplessness if left unchecked. In addition, employees can be empowered to move forward with their objectives without hindrance, having the assurance of control over their work tasks.

How to address it: Make policies and procedures clear and consistent. Post policies and reference them often. Be consistent in the enforcement — resist the urge to play favourites or bend the rules for certain employees.

9. DAUNTING COMMUTES:

Spending large chunks of the day commuting to and from the office wastes valuable energy. It adds an unnecessary burden to daily routines, often turning a simple trip into a dreaded event that can cause mental fatigue to take hold faster than usual. Encouraging employees to use public transportation whenever feasible, carpool, or use ride-sharing apps can simultaneously cut costs and reduce environmental impact.

How to address it: If feasible, offer employees a flex or work-from-home schedule. Also, set alternative start and quit times for those who need to be in the office to avoid commuter hours that tend to have more traffic and make commutes longer.

10. UNFAIR PAY:

Being underpaid relative to skill level and position can be a demoralizing experience, draining motivation slowly until an employee eventually decides to quit altogether. Low pay is cited as the main reason for 57% of all workers leaving their jobs.

How to address it: This is where HR departments come into play, offering competitive salaries and benefits packages to attract and retain a talent pool while keeping morale high at all times, even despite economic fluctuations or market forces beyond their control.

11. BULLYING AND HARASSMENT:

In extreme cases, demanding bosses can be manipulative, unprofessional and controlling – it equates to bullying and harassment. Research on Bullying at work carried out by the UK's Trade Union Congress (TUC) found that 29% of people have been bullied in the workplace and 72% of them reported that the bullying was being carried out by the manager.

Stress and ill health can become part of the daily life of those being bullied. It gets worse. A new report from the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) says a quarter of employees believe bullying and harassment are being overlooked.

12. LACK OF DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES:

We all want to feel valued and know that we are progressing. A job without opportunities can be soul-destroying. While routine can be reassuring, it can also be stifling. Not everyone can be the Managing Director, but it is important to remember that everyone has ambitions and dreams. Closing off avenues to self-improvement can have a devastating impact on self-esteem. And someone who lacks self-esteem is at risk of stress, or even depression. Discover how you can create a culture of development in our guide.

13. WORK-LIFE BALANCE:

Remote working has become the new norm for many. But how are we coping? The

Mental Health Foundation says the pressure of an increasingly demanding work culture in the UK is perhaps the biggest and most pressing challenge to the mental health of the general population. A survey by the charity found one third of respondents feel unhappy or very unhappy about the time they devote to work, a clear sign that many are struggling with work-life balance.

OUTCOMES OF EXPOSURE TO WORK RELATED STRESS:

Possible health effects:

Short-lived or infrequent exposure to low level stressors are not likely to lead to harm, in fact short-term exposure can result in improved performance. When stressful situations go unresolved, however, the body is kept in a constant state of stimulation, which can result in physiological and/or psychological changes and illness. For example:

Physical: headaches, indigestion, tiredness, slow reactions, shortness of breath.

Mental: difficulty in decision-making, forgetfulness.

Emotional: irritability, excess worrying, feeling of worthlessness, anxiety, defensiveness, anger, mood swings.

Intellectual: Loss of concentration, lack of motivation, difficulty with thought process, loss of memory, poor decision making.

Behavioural: diminished performance, withdrawal behaviours, impulsive behaviour, and increase in alcohol and nicotine consumption.

Common longer-term health issues linked to stress include cardiovascular disease (CVD), immune deficiency disorders, gastrointestinal disorders, psychiatric/psychological illness (PPI) and musculoskeletal disorders.

POSSIBLE EFFECTS ON ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE:

Increased stress levels of workers in an organisation can lead to diminished organisational performance as measured by the following:

- Productivity and efficiency may be reduced.
- Job satisfaction, morale and cohesion may decline.
- Absenteeism and sickness absence may increase.
- There may be an increase in staff turnover.
- Accidents and injuries may increase.
- Conflict may increase and the quality of relationships may decline.
- Client satisfaction may be reduced.
- There may be increased health care expenditure and workers' compensation claims.

The effects of work-related stress on organisational performance provide good reasons – above and beyond legal duties and the direct financial and human costs – as to why employers and other duty holders should reduce workers' exposure to workplace stressors.

STRESS MANAGEMENT:

Employee stress management is the strategy of providing employee with an environment and resources that reduce pressures and tensions in the work place. This will help the employees to keep their mental health in a better way. This process may involve discovering the cause of employees stress and devising a plan to address the origin. Once you develop a plan, you can communicate it to your employees and train other supervisors and team leaders on how to implement the desired plan. Workplace with good stress management plans for employees tend to experience greater productivity.

IMPORTANCE OF STRESS MANAGEMENT:

Stress Management aims at making a win-win situation for parties, the workers and the managers.

A) Employee Benefits:

- Decrease pressure

- Less non-attendance because of stress-related disorders
- Less unpleasant, increasingly proficient work environment
- Help with kid/eldercare plans
- Improved spirit
- Less negative pressure
- Better relationship both on and off the activity

B) Organizational Benefits:

- Employee fulfilment
- Measured increment in responsibility
- Better cooperation and correspondence
- Attract/hold workers
- Decrease work turnover
- Increase worker efficiency
- Improved reputation or Goodwill

ADVANTAGES OF STRESS MANAGEMENT AT WORKPLACE:

So far, the discussion has been about the effects of stress at work, but we'd like to turn the focus to the benefits of a low-stress work environment.

STRONG COMPANY CULTURE:

Employees have a major role in a company's culture. Healthier employees operating under manageable levels of stress will be happier and more positive, helping to maintain a strong, healthy workplace culture that's conducive to creativity and productivity.

LESS SICK DAYS:

Stress is one of the leading causes of absenteeism in the workplace. Not only will less stress in the workplace result in less “mental health days,” but it will also reduce the amount of sick days taken by employees due to a weakened immune system as a result of excessive stress.

EMPLOYEE RETENTION & TALENT ACQUISITION:

Employees who aren't overly stressed are much more likely to stick around, and prospective employees are much more likely to work for an employer that promotes a low-stress work environment and takes the initiative to help keep their employees healthy.

IT SHOWS YOU CARE:

Actively working to reduce stress through measures like stress management programs and policy shows that you care about your employees and their health and happiness.

TECHNIQUES FOR MANAGING STRESS AMONGST EMPLOYEES:

Here are some techniques for managing stress amongst employees:

1. CREATE A POSITIVE WORKPLACE CULTURE:

An effective technique you can implement is to create a positive workplace culture. You can begin this initiative by offering appreciation to all employees. It may take some time to learn what your employees respond well to, as some may prefer words of affirmation, while others may want to receive small gifts as signs of gratitude. When you introduce a system of recognition and rewards into the workplace, you may discover that employees feel more motivated to fulfil their responsibilities.

This system can also encourage peers to recognise and appreciate one another, which can further create a positive environment. Another element of creating a positive workplace culture is fostering healthy competition. Instead of having employees compete with one another, emphasise the importance of outperforming competing organisations. Employees can work together to achieve common goals and create prosperity for their shared organisation in

the long term.

2. COLLECT FEEDBACK FROM SURVEYS:

Another technique for managing stress amongst employees is to collect feedback from surveys. Distribute these surveys on a regular basis, whether that is every month or every quarter. Create the surveys to include some standardised questions so that you can get a consensus on certain elements of the workplace. You may also include more open-ended questions and response space so that employees can address workplace factors that are of concern to them.

Allow everyone in the organisation adequate time provide thorough responses. You may choose to make specific surveys anonymous so that you can collect honest feedback. The feedback you collect via surveys can be highly valuable when determining how to manage stress amongst staff members. You can learn what resources employees believe they are lacking so that you can understand what the company needs to provide them. You can also discover desired improvements to the organisational structure. Survey results may also reveal information about employees' perceptions of their own performance, their peers' performance and their professional goals. You can use the information you learn to create plans for accountability and professional development to increase satisfaction and reduce stress.

3. IMPLEMENT GOOD EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

You can reduce stress levels amongst employees by implementing good employee benefits. For instance, paid holidays are a basic benefit that an organisation can consider introducing. When employees know they do not work on widely recognised holidays and still receive pay, they may work with less stress leading up to these days. Another benefit that a company can consider implementing is an employee discount programme.

This kind of programme helps employees get home office equipment and other professional and personal essentials without paying full price, which they often appreciate greatly. The organisation can also implement perks like a good work-life balance and flexible working hours. Creating a good work-life balance means letting employees only work on their assignments when their works are on the schedule. Allow them to go home and live their personal lives without worrying the work at the office. You can also allow for flexible working

hours. Depending on the industry in which you work, flexible working hours may vary. For example, a marketing company may allow employees to work from home for few days when team does not meet with clients.

4. EMPHASISE THE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING OF EMPLOYEES:

Emphasising the physical health and mental well-being of employees can help them manage their stress levels. There are several ways to implement this technique. For example, you can invest in standing desks, yoga balls, stretching bands and desk treadmills so that employees can remain physically active during the workday. Encourage them to take walking breaks so that they can combat the negative effects that sitting for long periods can cause, like poor posture and back pain. You may also schedule weekly yoga sessions or virtual fitness sessions to encourage employees to remain active. You can also introduce measures to encourage employees' mental health.

Schedule monthly activities, like luncheons or trivia nights, outside of work. These activities give your employees the opportunity to socialise with and get to know one another in a different setting. This kind of bonding can help individuals learn to work together in the workplace and reduce stress that they may otherwise experience.

5. ENCOURAGE SELF-MANAGEMENT:

Encourage employees to participate in self-management, which is the practice of controlling one's emotions, thoughts and behaviours in different scenarios. Greater self-management can improve work efficiency and overall performance, which can help employees experience less work-related stress.

Employees who can manage their emotions, thoughts and behaviours may better understand their own weaknesses and strengths. They can learn more and motivate themselves, experiment with new processes and acknowledge their shortcomings without someone constantly distributing reminders. This also helps employees feel more competent and confident to complete their expected tasks and experienced personal growth.

6. REFINE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT PROCESSES:

As a leader within organisation, you can refine your conflict management processes

and help other supervisors do so as well. Wherever a conflict arises between two employees, conduct one-on-one conversations so that you can hear the situation from different perspectives. Practice empathy with each party. Mediate a conversation between the two employees and help them find a common solution. When it comes to conflict management, it is best to keep the focus on reducing tension within the team.

7. ENCOURAGE REALISTIC GOAL SETTING:

Ensure that your employees know how to set realistic goals for themselves. Striving for goals that are unrealistic or unattainable can create feelings of frustration and stress, so it is important that your employees are working towards goals that they can achieve using their skill sets and available resources. Introduce the concept of SMART goals so that employees can track the progress of their accomplishments. You may also evaluate the goals that you set for employees.

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LEGALITY OF STRESS:

Legislation covering stress at work is surprisingly piecemeal. There is not one piece of law that covers it. Instead, protection comes from a wide range of regulations

HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK ACT 1974:

Section 2 of the Act places a general duty upon all employers to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety and welfare at work of all employees.

THE MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY AT WORK REGULATIONS 1999:

Section 3 of the Regulations places a duty on all employers to make (and record if they have more than 5 employees) a suitable and sufficient assessment of the risks to the health and safety of their employees, to which they are exposed at work. Employers must ensure that there

are proper control measures in place to avoid these risks wherever possible. Where it is not possible to avoid risk, steps must be taken to reduce them so far, as is reasonably practicable.

THE WORKING TIME REGULATIONS 1998:

Long hours and shift work can be clearly linked to stress. The Working Time Regulations 1998 provide an entitlement of:

- A maximum of 8 hours of work for night shifts.
- A maximum working week of not more than 48 hours, including overtime (averaged out over a period of 17 weeks), although employees may opt out of this.
- A daily rest period of 11 hours.
- A day off every week.
- A rest break of 20 minutes if the working day is more than 6 hours.
- Paid annual leave of 4 weeks.

SAFETY REPRESENTATIVES AND SAFETY COMMITTEES REGULATIONS 1977 (SRSCR 1977):

This set of regulations along with the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999 gives safety representatives strong legal rights. All employers must consult any such safety reps to make and maintain arrangements so that employees can co-operate effectively to promote health and safety measures in the workplace and check the effectiveness of those measures.

SAFETY REPS ARE ENTITLED TO:

- Investigate potential hazards and dangerous occurrences and examine the causes of accidents at the workplace
- Carry out inspections as part of an active approach to identifying and preventing potential danger and harm in the workplace

- Consultation with members (there are also rights to facilities, a private room to talk to members, internal and external mail and telephone systems)
- Consult with management in good time, well in advance of changes taking place.
- Request information about any changes planned which may affect the future health and safety of those represented.
- Information and knowledge over and above employees generally where it is necessary to allow them to play an informed part in health and safety issues in the workplace; anonymous stress surveys, consultants reports, sickness records.

SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT 1975 AND RACE RELATIONS ACT 1976:

Where stress is being caused because of behaviour with an underlying sexual or racial nature the employer could be held vicariously liable for the actions of a harassing or bullying employee, even where the employer was unaware of the situation.

RIGHT TO FREE FROM MENTAL STRESS AND THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION:

Part III and IV of the Indian Constitution provides for the provisions relating to health and safety. The Indian Constitution does not expressly recognise the fundamental right to health. However, Article 21 of the Constitution of India guarantees right to life and personal liberty. After the Maneka Gandhi Case, the scope of Article 21 was enhanced and it was stated that the expression ‘life’ in the article means a life with human dignity and not mere survival or animal existence. The right to health is inherent to a life with dignity, and Article 21 should be read with Articles 38, 42, 43 and 47 to understand the nature of the obligation of the State in order to ensure the effective realization of this right. The aforementioned articles are discussed below.

1. **Article 38:** This article directs State to “secure a social order for the promotion of welfare of the people”. Read along with other provisions, it can be reasonably inferred that mental health is an integral part of overall welfare of an individual. Hence, this article casts a duty upon the State to make provisions that will help people improve their mental health.

2. **Article 39(e):** This article directs the State to construct policies on certain principles that will ensure that the mental health and wellness of workers, women and children are not rendered at risk because of economic restraints, which would otherwise inadvertently affect their well being.
3. **Article 41:** This article casts a duty upon the State to ensure the Right to work, to education and to public assistance, inter alia, in cases of disablement. Hence, the State must make policies that help persons suffering from mental health conditions secure economic and social stability whilst combating with their illnesses.
4. **Article 42:** This Article pertains to making policies for ensuring just and humane conditions of work and maternity relief of pregnant women. Such provisions will not only ensure the safety of pregnant women, but also ensure that they do not suffer from unnecessary stress or mental agony during their pregnancy and post maternal care.
5. **Article 47:** This article enshrines the directives for raising the levels of nutrition, standard of living, and public health. It recognizes this as one of the primary duties of the State. It has already been established above that mental health is an integral part of the overall health of a person. Hence, this article bestows the duty of improving standard of public mental health upon the State as one of its primary duties.

Consumer Education and Research Center v. Association of India, it was held that Article 21 has a much wider meaning which includes right to livelihood, better standard of living, hygienic conditions in the workplace and leisure facilities and opportunities to eliminate sickness and physical disability of the workmen. The court had opined that right to health was additionally a fundamental factor to have an important existence and for the right to life. It also forces an equal obligation on the State which is additionally strengthened as under Article 47.

Rakesh Chandra Narayan vs. State of Bihar certain cardinal principles were laid down by the apex Court. The right of persons with mental health conditions person to food, water, personal hygiene, sanitation and recreation is an extension of the right to life as in Article 21 of the Constitution. Quality norms and standards in mental health are non-negotiable and treatment, teaching, training and research must be integrated to produce the desired results.

Kirloskar brothers Ltd V Employees State Insurance Corporation, on the role of

employers in a welfare State, the Supreme Court held that employers had a duty to ensure that their employees can lead a meaningful life and therefore must be an equal participant in evolving and implanting welfare schemes. Various mental health laws had come into force to help people having mental illness which includes the Lunacy Act 1858, the Indian Lunatic Asylum Act 1858 and the Military Lunatic Act 1877. All these laws passed in British regime did not serve the intent of their introduction, these laws merely isolated people who had classified mental illness.

SUGGESTIONS:

1. A clear and comprehensive legislative frame work is required for promoting cordial stress free environment for the employees.
2. The importance of stress management has to be prioritised.
3. The awareness of stress management has to be provided by campaigns.

CONCLUSION:

It is inferred that in the present situation everybody i.e., a school going child or a worker have stress at various places. An excessive amount of pressure isn't useful for wellbeing. The executives needs to make a sound environment at work place and furthermore give vital preparing at all levels so that the stress can be limited and it prompts thriving and profitability. The entire management team can conduct various fun yet motivational activities in the organization. Instead of going for an annual excursion, it could be shifted to quarterly getaways. More psychological games should be introduced to know the exact feelings of an employee so that necessary measures could be taken. Weekly meditation and yoga sessions could be another way in dealing with stress because reason could be unlimited but problem will be the same.

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